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ABSTRACT

Prepared to ensure that California's community college professionals are aware of present and emerging requirements and options for a statewide accountability system, this paper provides an overview of accountability systems in other states and proposes a model for a California accountability system and specific measures that could be used to meet both state and institutional needs. Introductory sections explain the reasons that the California Association of Community Colleges decided to distribute the discussion paper to its membership, review the legislative mandate for the development of an accountability system, and explain the purposes of the paper. Next, an analysis of the accountability systems of other states discusses state-imposed measures in Florida and Tennessee, state-imposed standards with some measures determined by individual colleges in New Jersey, and state-established accountability categories with institutions determining the measures in Virginia and Colorado. This section also discusses the advantages and disadvantages of various methods used to assess institutional accountability, including student tracking, standardized tests, student self-reports, and factual measures. The next section proposes an accountability approach for California, including: (1) a discussion of the guiding principles of the model; (2) a chart listing methods for measuring the attainment of specific outcomes desired at the state level (e.g., diversity, fiscal stability, and effective programs; and (3) an outline of institutional accountability measures to be used for internal evaluation of the college. Concluding remarks include an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed model. (WJT)

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A PROPOSED ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL FOR CALIFORNIA'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A PAPER FOR DISCUSSION

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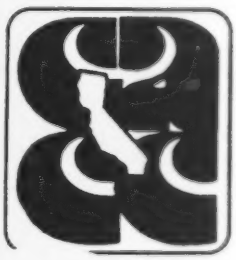

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PREFACE

The Commission on Research of the California Association of Community Colleges has historically been concerned with the issue of institutional and statewide accountability. The membership has been involved in reviewing and developing strategies to measure institutional effectiveness and recently published two related papers. "Institutional Research for Decision-Making and Accountability in California Community Colleges" discussed the role of institutional research in evaluating institutional effectiveness. "Indicators and Measures of Successful Community Colleges" was the report of a survey designed to develop criteria for measuring effectiveness and success. Both were published in November, 1988.

Recently the commission has been involved in discussions related to the work of the CCC Task Force on AB 1725 Accountability Requirements, and the accountability that is called for in AB 462 currently before the Legislature. Through these discussions, the Commission has developed several principles which the members feel are key to accountability systems, and which are generally reflected in the model proposed by Jack Friedlander and Peter MacDougall. Those principles include:

- different arenas (state, system, and local) require different levels of accountability and assessment
- accountability should relate to the mission and goals of the institution, system, and/or state
- accountability should be part of planning and resource allocation, and provides feedback to the institution, system, and/or state for the program improvement
- accountability should be viewed as a positive process
- any new accountability systems should be integrated with existing systems

The CACC Board of Directors at their January meeting reviewed this paper, "A Proposed Accountability Model for California's Community Colleges," and concluded that distributions to CACC member colleges as a discussion paper would be beneficial. The Board recognizes the importance of the topic because of the action called for in AB 1725 to have the California Community College Board of Governors establish by July 1, 1990, a comprehensive educational and fiscal accountability system. The Board supported three of the objectives the authors had for writing the paper:

- assure that California's community college professionals are aware of present and emerging requirements for a statewide accountability system;
- create an awareness of accountability systems that have been developed in other states and the lessons that can be learned through analysis of those approaches;
- stimulate discussion among California's community college professionals regarding what measures should constitute an accountability system for our colleges.

Neither the CACC Commission on Research nor the Board of Directors has taken an official position on the paper, but both groups felt exposure of our member institutions to the concepts was invaluable to ensure participation on the emerging model that will affect all colleges.

The paper grew out of the authors' review of accountability practices in other states and a desire to present options for consideration by California's community colleges. In addition to this distribution, the paper has been presented at the CACC Annual Convention in November, 1989, as well as at meetings of the CACC Commission on Research and the CCC Chancellor's Office Task Force on Accountability. It has also been discussed with legislative staff involved in the development of AB 462 (Hayden).

The Commission on Research and the authors of the paper invite members of the college community to review this paper. Responses, comments, and concerns may be addressed to the authors, Jack Friedlander, Dean, Academic Affairs, and Peter MacDougall, Superintendent/President, at Santa Barbara City College, or to Cindra Smith, Associate Executive Director of CACC and staff to the Commission on Research.

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INTRODUCTION

Assembly Bill 1725, a landmark piece of reform legislation for the California Community Colleges, requires that the California Community College Board of Governors establish by July 1, 1990, a comprehensive community college educational and fiscal accountability system. The accountability system, to be implemented over a three year period beginning in 1991-92, calls for defining and measuring both quantitatively and qualitatively items such as:

- Student access to community colleges
- The extent to which the community college student body as a whole proportionately reflects the adult population of the state
- Student transfer programs and rates
- Academic standards and student achievement
- Student goal satisfaction and success in courses and programs
- Completion rates of courses and programs
- Occupational preparation relative to state and local workforce needs and for entry-level employment, occupational advancement, and career changes of students
- Adequacy of courses in basic skills and English as a Second Language and instruction in preparing students to succeed in collegiate-level work
- Adequacy of and student satisfaction with student services
- The extend to which the community college workforce proportionately reflects the adult population of the state
- Fiscal conditions of community college districts

We believe the above factors were meant to be illustrative rather than rigid expectation to be included in an accountability system. The bill gives the California Community College Board of Governors the authority to recommend the structuring of the accountability system called for in AB 1725.

In addition to the legislative mandate for accountability contained in AB 1725 is AB 462 (Hayden), an omnibus bill for higher education. This bill will amend the Master Plan for California's System of Higher Education now outlined in statute from the Donahoe Act. The bill contains policy direction for establishing an accountability system for California's postsecondary segments. The bill states:

> "It is the intent of the Legislature...to foster the creation and implementation of a comprehensive and ongoing accountability system which assess the performance of institutions of higher education in California."
>
> The bill further states, "that institutions of higher education are held accountable for the achievement of the educational quality, equity, unity, and efficiency goals and policies set forth in the...Master Plan for Higher Education." (Pg. 42, AB 462; 2/2/89)

Thus, it is clear from the requirements in AB 1725 and the bill to revise the Master Plan (AB 462) that a statewide system of accountability will be a reality for California's community colleges.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this paper are to:

1. Assure that California's community college professionals are aware of the present and emerging requirements for a statewide accountability system;

2. Create an awareness of accountability systems that have been developed for community colleges in other states and the lessons that can be learned through analysis of those approaches;

3. Stimulate discussion among California community college professionals regarding what measures should constitute an accountability system for our colleges; and,

4. Advance a point of view regarding the primary bases for such a system, assumptions that should guide its development, and specific measures that could be used to meet both state and institutional needs.

REVIEW OF ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS IN OTHER STATES

In a growing number of states, community colleges are required to develop plans to assess student achievement in such areas as basic skills and remediation, general education, acquisition of knowledge in the major field, personal development, job placement, and transfer to four-year colleges and universities. In addition, colleges are asked to describe how the results of these assessments are being used to improve their effectiveness in promoting student achievement of desired outcomes. Such state mandates for assessing institutional effectiveness and applying results to improve upon the attainment of desired educational outcomes have had a major influence on community colleges in those states.

An analysis of the accountability systems implemented in other states reveals that they can be placed along a continuum. The continuum ranges from state-imposed measures which all colleges must use to state defined categories for accountability with the method of measuring each of the categories left to the discretion of the individual college.

A brief review of these approaches follows:

A. State-Imposed Measures

Florida and Tennessee are examples of states which require all public colleges and universities to use the same measures for assessing institutional accountability.

To illustrate, all Florida postsecondary institutions are required to respond to nineteen measures. Examples of these measures include:

- Scores on the College-Level Academic Skills Assessment test, a standardized achievement test required of all college sophomore students desiring to enter their junior year
- Grade-point averages in upper division course work or job placement rates of community college graduates
- Percent of degree-seeking students who are awarded degrees
- Percent of students who complete preparatory instruction, then continue to receive degrees or certificates
- Progress toward goals of the state plan for equal access/equal opportunity for students.

The Tennessee system contains performance-based funding where up to 5.45 percent of the college's budget is made available based upon institutional performance on the following five categories:

- Accreditation: percentage of accreditable programs that are accredited.
- Major Fields and Placement: student performance on tests required in order to receive a license or certification in a particular profession, and placement of community college graduates in jobs or transfer institutions.
- General Education: scores of college graduates on the ACT-CAMP, a standardized test designed to assess competencies in general education.
- Alumni Satisfaction: every two years the graduating class of two years before is surveyed with a common instrument.

- Correction Measures: actions taken by the institution to address weaknesses identified in the other standards. (Tennessee, Dept. of Higher Education, 1987)

In both states, institutions are required to use standardized tests developed by ETS (Florida) and ACT (Tennessee) to assess student's knowledge of general education after completing two years of college level course work.

B. Combination: State-Imposed Accountability Standards with Some Measures Determined by the Individual Colleges

New Jersey represents an approach to accountability in which the state defines the standards to be measured, and in some areas allows the individual institutions to define how the standard will be measured. To illustrate, all higher education institutions are required to administer standardized tests which assess student intellectual skills. Additional common measures to assess student performance include individual college performance regarding:

- Retention
- Graduation Rates
- Grade Point Average
- Units Completed

Flexibility is given to colleges to determine their procedures for assessing their effectiveness in each of the following areas mandated by the State:

- Major Fields of Study
- Student Satisfaction and Personal Development
- Outcomes of Faculty Research
- Scholarship and Creative Expression
- Economic and Cultural Impact of the College on its Community

C. State Established Accountability Categories with Institutions Determining the Measures

Virginia and Colorado are examples of states where the categories for which the institutions are held accountable are established by the state, but the means for measuring each of the categories is left to the individual institution. More specifically, individual colleges and universities develop or choose assessment methods appropriate to their diverse characters and mission. To illustrate, the six categories of accountability established by the State of Virginia are:

- Assessment procedures for general education
- Assessment procedures for the major
- Alumni follow-up studies
- Skills necessary to do college/degree/credit work at the institution
- Evaluation of the success of the remediation program
- Assessment of the results of programs to address identified problems or deficiencies

Virginia community colleges are required to document how this information will be used to improve college programs and specifically, how the information collected benefits students, faculty, and the curriculum.

D. Summary of Criteria States Use to Measure Institutional Accountability

The accountability measures used in other states can be grouped into one of the following four categories. In addition, we have included in the following table our assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of each of the approaches for gathering data for accountability.

TRACKING OF STUDENT PROGRESS

Measures

- Job Placement and Performance
- Transfer Rates

Advantages

a. Excellent measure of student outcomes
b. Efficient when in place; e.g., community college transfers
c. Can have minimal impact on staff/resources if state management information systems in place
d. Uniform data collection
e. Allows strengths/weaknesses to be identified
f. Longitudinal data can be used to assess effectiveness of corrective measures

Disadvantages

a. Can be very costly; e.g., vocational placement follow-up
b. Students moving from college to college hinders tracking
c. Requires significant D.P./MIS support and expertise
d. Requires cooperation of agencies and individuals outside the control of the college
e. Allows for inter-institutional comparisons that may be misleading and could lead to uniformity
f. Can be a peripheral activity; i.e., not connected to the faculty and staff responsible for the programs

STANDARDIZED TESTS

Measures

- Rising Junior Exam
- Measures of General Student Learning
- Value-added - comparisons of scores on a pre-test versus scores on a post-test

Advantages

a. Objective
b. Efficient method for collecting data
c. Allow for inter-institutional comparisons
d. Valuable in conducting longitudinal studies
e. Recognized as a valid measure of achievement

Disadvantages

a. Costly to use
b. Difficult to administer
c. Low motivation for students to take tests
d. Weak relationship of test to the curriculum
e. Problems of interpretation of results
    - Out-of-course influences
    - Ceiling effect
f. Difficult to control for differences in courses taken
g. Tests may be measuring general intelligence and reading skills
h. Tests too firmly connected to abstract verbal facility

STUDENT SELF-REPORTS	
Measures • Alumni Satisfaction • Student Satisfaction • Personal and Intellectual Development	
Advantages	**Disadvantages**
a. Can collect data easily on measures of satisfaction and progress toward achieving education objective b. Can be coordinated with institutional programs c. Relatively inexpensive to administer d. Can be a source of institutional renewal e. Allows for longitudinal assessment	a. Credibility is low b. Inter-institutional comparisons are very difficult c. Problems in validating locally-developed instruments d. Generally limited to perceptions of attainment rather than measures of content mastery

FACTUAL	
Measures • Demographic Information • Population Served • Accredited Programs • Performance on Licensing Exams (Nursing, Radiology, etc.)	
Advantages	**Disadvantages**
a. High credibility b. Allows for inter-institutional comparisons c. Easily interpreted d. Can assess broad changes over time	a. Scope limited; i.e., only relates to specific programs/measures b. Factual data from external sources; e.g., census, may not conform to district definitions

Perspective on Other States Approaches to Accountability

It is our opinion that the two fundamental outcomes that have been sought in other states have been: (1) a desire by state policy makers to understand the effect of higher education on its citizenry and, (2) that institutions should improve on the performance of their students.

From our review of the approaches taken to achieve these objectives, we believe they can be improved. Basic to doing so is the recognition that a system should be designed to achieve both state and institutional needs. The state should obtain information to assess whether the state-determined mission is being achieved. The institution should obtain information that focuses on the improvement of teaching and learning. It is this latter objective that is diminished in the approaches of other states that we have reviewed.

APPROACH TO ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

The thesis for the approach we are recommending for California is that the accountability system should have as its core objective the improvement of teaching and learning while preserving the diversity among institutions of higher education and meeting legitimate state needs for fiscal and educational information. The ultimate goal of accountability is to improve student attainment of desired educational outcomes in as efficient and effective a manner as possible.

A. Principles for Establishing an Accountability System

The challenge for California is to develop an accountability system that is balanced; i.e., state needs are met while the essential purpose of improving teaching and learning is fulfilled and institutional diversity is preserved. To achieve this balance the following seven principles should be considered:

1. A consensus must be formed among state, system, and college leaders in regard to:
   a. Using the accountability system as a primary means for improving student learning and development;
   b. Tailoring accountability to the particular missions, characteristics, and educational objectives of the colleges; and,
   c. Assuring that measures used to assess student performance are directly related to teaching and learning processes.

2. In developing a state system of accountability, the procedures followed and the outcomes achieved from the institutional accreditation process should be taken into account.

3. Information needed for accountability should be obtained through existing data gathering activities; e.g., registration, assessment, course examinations, course evaluation, program reviews, and the state management information system.

4. In addition to defining the goals and objectives of their courses, college staff should determine the institution's educational objective to be achieved by its students.

5. Faculty and student services staff should be involved in selecting and/or developing measures to assess student performance and outcomes.

6. Accountability activities should be closely coordinated with the college's staff development and other programs designed to improve student performance.

7. To effectively conduct activities related to accountability, adequate staff resources need to be committed.

B. Proposed Accountability Model for California's Community Colleges

In developing the following proposed accountability model, we have incorporated the seven principles enumerated above and attempted to meet the challenge of developing an accountability system that is balanced in that state needs are met while the essential purpose of improving teaching and learning is fulfilled and institutional diversity is preserved.

1. <u>State and System Accountability Information Needed</u>

The information provided the State of California should be sufficient to determine if the mission specified for the California Community Colleges is being achieved.

The mission for the California Community Colleges includes: transfer education (Lower-division instruction), vocational instruction, remedial instruction, English as a Second Language, adult non-credit instruction, and fee-based community service instruction. In addition, access and equity are major system requirements.

The following measures will provide the information needed to determine the California Community Colleges attainment of its mission as defined by the Legislature. In addition, the State has a specific interest in categorical programs funded to achieve focused objectives and a general interest in efficient use of facilities and responsible fiscal management. Information from the following reports and audits should respond to these needs. Data will be aggregated and presented for the system. The Board of Governors will have responsibility to follow up with individual colleges.

ACCOUNTABILITY INFORMATION NEEDED BY THE STATE AND CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM	
Desired Outcome	**Measure for Assessing Attainment**
A. Diversity - Achievement of ethnic, gender, and disabled representation.	a. Student enrollments proportional to ethnic composition of high school graduating classes b. Degree of attainment of affirmative action goals for staffing
B. Education Programs.	
1. Transfer Programs	a. Number of students transferring and the ethnic composition b. Subsequent performance
2. Vocational Programs	a. Job placements b. Initial salary c. Employer satisfaction with program completers and leavers d. Performance on licensing exams; e.g., Nurses, Dental Assisting, Radiology, etc.
3. Remedial Programs	a. Number of entering students needing remediation and the extent of remediation needed b. Percentage of students who successfully complete the remedial classes in which they are enrolled c. Number of students who enter college in remedial classes and progress into college-level courses* d. Number of students entering college in remedial classes and transfering to a four-year college or university
4. ESL Programs	a. Number of entering students needing ESL courses b. Percentage of students successfully completing the ESL courses in which they are enrolled c. Number of entering students who start in ESL classes and progress into college-level, Non-ESL classes* d. Number of students entering college in ESL classes and transfering to a California four-year college or university*
5. Non-Credit Programs	a. Number of students enrolled in each of the nine non-credit funded categories
C. Specialized Categorically Funded Programs	a. Evaluation reports for: •EOPS •DSPS •Matriculation (Admissions, Assessment, Advisement, Orientation, and Registration)
D. Fiscal Stability	a. 50% Law b. Audits

ACCOUNTABILITY INFORMATION NEEDED BY THE STATE AND CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM cont.	
Outcome	**Measure**
E. Facilities Utilization and Maintenance **NOTE:* *Only if this information can be obtained by the Chancellor's Office staff through the M.I.S.*	a. Classroom Utilization b. Deferred Maintenance: value and deferred maintenance expenditures for the physical plant. c. Equipment Inventory: value and annual expenditure for replacement.

C. Institutional Accountability Measures

Institutional accountability measures are to be used only by the college for internal evaluation and are not to be submitted to the state. The institutional-based measures are to be used by the colleges as a primary means for improving student learning and development. These measures should be directly related to teaching and learning processes.

1. Accountability Information Submitted to the State

   Institutions will be responsible for analyzing the information they submit to the state and using the results of this analysis to improve institutional practices.

2. Institutional Accreditation Standards

   Individual colleges undertake a comprehensive self-study every six years to be considered for accreditation. Reports are submitted annually to reflect progress made on recommendations from team visits. The following are the areas in which current standards are applied by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges:

   - Goals and Objectives
   - Educational Programs
   - Institutional Staff
   - Student Services
   - Community Education
   - Learning Resources
   - Physical Resources
   - Fiscal Resources
   - Governance

   It is assumed that information pertaining to each of these area will be systematically collected, analyzed, and applied to institutional development between comprehensive visits.

3. Evaluation of Individual Programs

   - Academic Affairs. Each academic program will be evaluated periodically using program review procedures developed by the institution.

   - Student Affairs. Student Services Program Review Project procedures will be applied to assess the effectiveness of student services programs. (These procedures were developed by California community college student affairs professionals.)

THE COLLEGE	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
a. State accountability information needs can be met primarily through existing reporting mechanisms and the proposed state M.I.S.	a. Colleges may lack staff expertise and commitment to develop and maintain an effective system of accountability.
b. Information provided to the State is of concomitant value to the institution.	b. Adequate funding could be a problem.
c. Colleges are given latitude to develop: • Program review processes, • Means to assess student achievement, and • Measures of student satisfaction and development.	
d. Colleges have the primary responsibility for improving their effectiveness.	
e. Accreditation continues to be a predominant mechanism for comprehensive, self-directed institutional assessment and improvement.	
f. A state imposed compliance-based system that requires significant investment of staff time and resources and which could be contrary to institutional priorities is averted.	

CONCLUSION

We have attempted to provide an understanding regarding:

- The momentum provided by the State legislature to develop an accountability system for the California systems of higher education;
- Approaches taken by other states to grapple with accountability issues an an identification of the major areas of measurement being pursued;
- A proposed system for the California Community Colleges that simultaneously responds to legitimate state needs while assuring an institutional and student learning focus; and,
- Some advantages and disadvantages of the model presented.

A system of accountability will effect our colleges in terms of the time and resources needed to respond to it and the focus it automatically places on what is taught. It is our hope that this paper will provide a stimulus for much-needed discussion and refinement of an approach to accountability for the California community colleges, the largest system of public higher education in the world. Fundamental to this approach must be the belief that local community colleges are governed by trustees, and led by administrators and faculty who are deeply committed to developing the very finest of colleges.

We believe the following quote embodies what should be achieved through the accountability system developed for California's community colleges:

4. Student Success

The following measures of student success will be analyzed by ethnicity and will be longitudinal.

a. Course Completion Rate: A, B, C, and Cr
b. Student Persistence - semester to semester
c. Student involvement in activities that contribute to student learning and development; e.g., active learning, extra-curricular activities, involvement with faculty, etc. (quality of effort)

Critique of Proposed Approach

The following is our critique of the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed accountability model from the perspective of the state and individual colleges. This critique is provided to stimulate discussion among community college professionals with the expectation that it will result in an improved accountability model.

THE STATE:	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
a. Provides evidence to the state essential for determining the extent to which: • Objectives regarding diversity are being met. • The components of the mission are being achieved. • Expectation regarding special programs are being fulfilled. • Colleges are operating in a fiscally sound manner. • Facilities provided are being used and maintained appropriately. • Colleges are evaluating their programs and using the results to improve their programs. • Colleges are examining measures of student success and using that information to improve teaching and learning. • Colleges are continuing to meet the standards for accreditation.	a. Will not produce standardized measures of student achievement of: • Pre-Collegiate Skills • General Education
b. Done by and large with measures in place. Does not require a significant change in the current methods of acquiring data.	b. Inter-institutional comparison on student performance on standardized tests are not available.
c. Does not divert extensive use of college resources from teaching and learning to meet the State's accountability reporting requirements.	c. Nothing to indicate the cultural or economic impact of the colleges or their communities.
d. State measures allow for institutional diversity to be maintained.	d. No systematic way of knowing how colleges are using the information produced through their accountability efforts to improve institutional practices.
e. Does not require significant funding to implement.	e. No standardized measures of student satisfaction.
	f. No standardized measures of the personal development of students.
	g. Potential that inadequate, locally developed measures will limit the quality of information available to improve performance.

"Assessment should become, over time, an aspect not only for evaluation but of the curriculum itself. Assessment, at its best, can be a learning process for all participants:

- The state learns which institutions are producing results.
- The college learns how well it is accomplishing the goals it has set for itself.
- The individual teacher learns where he or she has been effective and where not.
- The student develops the capacities for self-reflection and self-evaluation." (Miller, 1987)

We believe that the proposed approach will achieve the outcomes stated above. We expect that with subsequent debate and refinement, an accountability system that meets the needs of the state, the college, the teacher, and the student can be developed.

REFERENCES

"Miller, M.A., Virginia Plan for Higher Education: Report on Student Assessment. State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, 1987."

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
FEB 22 1990